The problem of human life as viewed by the great thinkers from Plato to the present time

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THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN LIFE

AS VIEWED BY THE GREAT THINKERS
FROM PLATO TO THE PRESENT TIME

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AUTHOR’S PREFACE
TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

It is a genuine pleasure to me to see “The Problem of Human Life” in an English Version, particularly as the translation has been prepared with great care by esteemed friends, and is, I think, entirely successful.

The present book forms the essential complement of all my other works. It is designed to afford historical confirmation of the view that conceptions are determined by life, not life by conceptions. Under the guidance of this conviction the book traverses the whole spiritual development of the Western world, in the hope that the several phases of the development, and, above all, its great personalities, will be brought nearer to the personal experience of the reader than is customarily done. Particularly in an age of predominant specialisation, when the pursuit of learning too often endangers the completeness of living, such an endeavour is fully justified.

I hope that the English-speaking public will give the book a sympathetic reception. With their own thinkers, the problem of life has always stood in the foreground, and scientific research steadily regarded the whole life of man. Thus my book presents nothing foreign to the genius of the English-speaking peoples: may it be felt and welcomed by them as something kindred to their own aims!

RUDOLF EUCKEN.

Jena.
TRANSLATORS' PREFACE

The following translation of Eucken's "Die Lebensanschauungen der grossen Denker: Eine Entwicklungsgeschichte des Lebensproblems der Menschheit von Plato bis zur Gegenwart" is based substantially upon the seventh German edition, Leipzig, 1907. But, owing to the rapidity with which the three last editions have succeeded the fifth, and to unavoidable interruptions of the work of translation, the above statement requires a word of explanation. The translation was begun from the fifth edition, and had progressed as far as the section on Origen, when the sixth edition appeared. This edition presented no changes, other than purely verbal ones, in the portion already translated, except in the account of Plato, particularly the important section on the Theory of Ideas. The passages affected were, of course, revised in accordance with the text of the new edition. The seventh edition being almost immediately called for, and Mr. Boyce Gibson having consented to undertake the translation of Part Third, the relatively extensive alterations and additions designed for this edition were communicated to the translators in MS. The new material, however, with but two or three exceptions, concerned only the portions not yet translated, and was accordingly readily incorporated into the text. The translation as it stands, therefore, is in all essential respects a version of the seventh German edition.¹

But mention should be made of certain omissions from the text of the original in Parts First and Second. The author gave his ready assent to the exercise of a minor editorial privilege in this regard; and, solely with a view to condensation, a few para-

¹The eighth edition, which has appeared since the translation was in type, contains, as the author has assured the translators, "no material changes or additions, but only verbal improvements of the German text, which may be entirely ignored, so far as the translation is concerned."
graphs, and an occasional sentence or even phrase, particularly in the relatively long accounts of Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and Augustine, and in the section on Origen, have been omitted, entirely at the discretion of the first-named translator. No attempt has been made to indicate the points at which such omissions occurred; but their whole number would not aggregate more than a few pages.

The work of translation has been divided as follows, each translator being solely responsible for the portion undertaken by him. Parts First and Second, on Hellenism and on Christianity respectively, and the Author's Preface to the English Edition, have been translated by Mr. Hough; Part Third, on the Modern World, and the Introduction, have been translated by Mr. Gibson. It should be said, however, that nearly all of the first draft of those parts for which Mr. Gibson is responsible was made by his wife, and that her collaboration upon the whole work of this portion has been of the first importance. For the preparation of the Indexes the translators are further indebted to Mrs. Gibson, and, in part, to Mrs. Hough.

The translators have felt keenly the difficulty of deciding upon an English title for the work which would be wholly free from objection. The title finally adopted may at first appear to be a bold substitution; but familiarity with the work will make it clear that in reality it sounds the key-note of the book. If it be objected that the virtual transposition of the principal and the subordinate title of the original could only result in a change of emphasis, the reply is that this alternative was chosen as the least of many evils. It may be added that the author preferred the title adopted to any of the others proposed.

In preparing the English Version the translators have set accuracy before all else. They are, however, of opinion that fidelity is in general not to be secured by literal transcription. Moreover, since the present work is designed for the larger public as well as for academic uses, they have endeavoured to keep the diction as free as possible from technical expressions and from traces of German idiom. At the same time it should
be said that the style of the original, by virtue indeed of the very qualities which give it its distinction and individuality, presents certain difficulties which the translators cannot hope wholly to have surmounted; and, particularly in view of the distinguished recognition which the literary value of the author's work has recently received, they submit their translation to the public with no little diffidence.

In conclusion, the translators desire to express their obligations to Lady Welby, who kindly read Part First in MS., and made numerous valuable suggestions; to Professor Arthur C. Mc-Giffert, who similarly read the MS. of Part Second, and gave it the benefit of his intimate knowledge of early Christianity; but particularly to the author, who not only read the entire translation in MS., but has throughout assisted the translators with advice on any points of unusual difficulty.

W. S. H.

W. R. B. G.
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